

# THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUTH KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—Cowper.



"A BROTHER'S HAND MUST RAISE HIM NOW, AND A BROTHER'S ARM WILL SUPPORT HIM."

## STORY OF THE CROOKED SIXPENCE.

CHAPTER XXX.—THE POOR CLERK FINISHES HIS OWN STORY.

ONCE more a cheerful fire burned red and bright in the poor clerk's little room. The weather was autumnal, wet and boisterous, and the atmosphere without was keen and cutting; but it was warm and cheerful within, so that the dull stencilled walls

threw out their dim patterns, and glowed with an appearance of comfort.

The solitary man had returned earlier than usual from Pegram's Wharf, and the little barber had shut up his shop: it was such a rough unpleasant evening that he was sure he should have no more custom that night. Mr. Keenedge had also thrown aside his apron, and had brushed himself up for the evening's visit. "You are so much above me,

every way, John," he said, "that I hadn't ought to come and sit down here, keeping you company, in deshable;" but the lodger did not hear, or hearing, did not notice the apology of his friend for having put on his blue swallow-tailed coat, and Mr. Keenedge was soon seated.

"I told you, Mr. Keenedge," began the poor clerk, resuming his narrative, "that I was sentenced to imprisonment for four years; and from the court I was taken back to Newgate. So also was Owen, and for a few days we met frequently in the common yard, until I was removed to the prison where my term was to be worked out, and he was sent on board the transport ship.

"I had not much heart for further communication with my tempter, but he seemed determined that I should not escape from his influence; and the last thing he told me was that, when he returned to England, he would find me if I were alive; and that, whether I would or not, I should again be in the same boat with him—this was his expression—and that we should sink or swim together."

"You have not heard of him since, have you, John?" interposed Mr. Keenedge.

"No; and I trust I never may, unless it be to hear that his heart is changed by Almighty love and power: that would be a happy day, my friend; but otherwise, I wish never to hear of him again. For I have sometimes been afraid—his time having expired now some year or two—that he would cross my path unexpectedly.

"However, we parted, and for four years the prison walls concealed me from the world; and my name was forgotten, I suppose, by those who had once known me. But not by all: there was one who did not forget me, nor forsake me."

"Your Ellen?" said the little barber, softly.

"Yes, Ellen. Miserable wretch as I was, Ellen did not turn from me with contempt and scorn. If I had prospered in my sinful courses, she would have grieved for me, but she would have remained steadfast to her resolution: I should have been discarded. But, in my degradation, she remembered only my misery, and she visited me. I shall never forget the first time she came. It was on Sunday; and I was shut up in my cell when the turnkey told me that a friend was come to see me. I would rather have been left alone, and I told him so. I did not want anybody whom I had formerly known, to come prying into my wretchedness, and taking away reports of how I looked and what I said; but while I was saying this, the door was pushed open, and Ellen entered.

"Dear Ellen! She was pale and flurried, and she trembled very much, as well she might; but she had a brave heart, as well as a kind and loving and generous heart. I did not know till then—no, I did not know even then, for the knowledge came to me afterwards by slow degrees—what a treasure I had recklessly and wickedly cast away.

"She did not speak of our past engagement; and not a word was breathed by her of love. It was not that which brought her to my side: it was compassion for the poor lost one whom all else scorned—scorned too deeply to remember, or to name his name. She came to comfort and to teach.

"She came again and again; and though I knew, and she knew, that all the past, as regarded our two selves, was obliterated, yet her visits were a blessed relief. It was from her lips that I received the invitation of Divine mercy, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' it was her voice which (as she kneeled by my side) interceded for me, and would fain have led me on to the penitent's first impulse, 'I will arise and go to my father, and say, I have sinned. I have sinned.'"

"She was an angel, John; she must ha' been," sobbed the little barber.

"Almost," replied the poor clerk; "at least, so it seemed then to me. For in her presence I sometimes felt as though I might be led back again to become even as a little child."

"And it was so, John? Yes, yes; and that was how—"

"My friend, no," said the poor clerk, quickly. "It was an earthly, selfish repentance which then, at times, seemed to stir within me; a false and fleeting humility which led me to abhor myself in her presence. To all besides, I was proud, haughty, revengeful. My thoughts and feelings were very bitter then, Mr. Keenedge."

"I can't gainsay what you are pleased to tell me, John," said Mr. Keenedge, "and what your humble thoughts make you say; but I am interrupting you, and that's ill-mannered, John."

"My story will soon be finished now, my friend," the poor clerk went on. "I had endured two years of my punishment—my just punishment—and in all that time, perhaps it might be once in a month, I received Ellen's visits. They were not regular, however; sometimes a longer time passed away, and I began to think she would not come again. But every time she came, I could but note (though my cell was very dark and gloomy) that Ellen seemed increasingly pale and thin and weakly. I might have known this more certainly, perhaps, but she would never speak about herself, nor allow me to do so; and I could not disobey her, though to others I was rebellious enough.

"Yes, it was about two years," continued the speaker, covering his forehead with his hand, and pressing it as though in thought, or perhaps to hide for a moment a tear which glistened beneath his eyelashes, "perhaps a little more than two years after my imprisonment began, that the chaplain put into my hand a letter. It had, of course, been opened by the authorities of the prison, and because of this, I proudly put it aside without even looking at the direction.

"'You had better read it,' said he, compassionately—probably he fathomed my feelings; 'it does not contain good news,' he added; 'but perhaps it may do you good.'

"I unfolded the letter silently, and began to read. It was from Ellen. She was ill—she felt herself to be dying—she had concealed from me that for many months her health had been rapidly declining; but she assured me, for my comfort, that her disease (it was cancer, I afterwards learned; and she suffered acutely, fearfully, and with the heroism of a martyr)—but she assured me that her disease had

neither been brought on nor hastened by her anxiety on my account. And then, passing from herself, she addressed me—— But you shall see the letter itself some day, Mr. Keenedge: I must pass over it now."

"Do, John, do; yes, yes; I can understand," said Mr. Keenedge, in a broken voice.

"I never saw Ellen again," the solitary went on, speaking more rapidly; "I had messages from her from time to time; but every time it was that she was weaker—nearer home. At last these messages ceased; and then I knew that she was dead."

"After this, my prison life was a blank. It is very little that I remember of it. I believe that I laboured on, monotonously and uncomplainingly, and rarely spoke either to fellow prisoner, turnkey, governor, or chaplain: and, at last, my time expired, and I was set free."

"I left prison," continued the poor clerk, "not much caring what should become of me, but determined only on two points: first, that I would not go near any of my former connections or acquaintance; and next, that I would live honestly, or, if I could not do *that*, that I would starve."

"Brayvo!" shouted the little landlord approvingly. "That was well meant, John, and is only what I was sure would come."

"It was easier to make such a determination than to carry it out," the poor clerk resumed; "I was something like the steward we read of in the Lord's parable: I could not dig, and to beg I was ashamed. I could write, certainly, but who would take a clerk who had no character, and who declined to give any account of himself? I knew this was out of the question, and I did not attempt it. So, in short, I became a vagabond."

"John!" interjected Mr. Keenedge.

"A wanderer, I left London behind me, and struck out into the country. Happily for me, it was summer, and I could sleep in barns, or sometimes in the open air, under shelter of hayricks, without much hardship or even inconvenience, and the few shillings given me by the governor and chaplain when I left prison, sustained life for two or three weeks while I was seeking for work. At last I obtained temporary employment at harvesting. It had happened that, while living with my brother-in-law, the farmer, I had, for the fun of it, as I said, worked pretty hard at reaping, so as to get my hand accustomed to that work, and I passed muster pretty successfully when I tried it again. From reaping I went to hop-picking; and this not only kept me employed to the end of autumn, but put a few pounds into my possession."

"Then I returned to London, for there was no more chance employment to be picked up in the country; and that winter I succeeded tolerably well in obtaining occasional work at the docks and on the river."

"In this manner five years passed away; I had no settled home; I had not a friend, scarcely an acquaintance; for I resolutely determined to make none. I picked up work as I could, in the streets of the town, taking care to avoid the city, where I had been known and might be recognised; and when this failed, I travelled the country."

"At length I was taken ill. Exposure to weather, and the hardships of my way of life, made inroads on my constitution. I was in the country then; but I dragged myself back to London, and there I broke down. I was found in the streets insensible, and suffering from fever, emaciated and all but dying, as I was afterwards told; and in that condition I was taken to an hospital. It was a sore and long battle between death and life, but I was not to die then; gradually the fever left me and I recovered strength. Then I was dismissed—cured. Cured, but without a penny to procure me food, or a place to lay my head. It was winter, too; and though I tried hard to get work, I could not succeed. My cadaverous looks told against me."

"I became desperate, Mr. Keenedge. I trust I have been forgiven; but wicked thoughts came into my mind then. I looked upon death as a welcome release, and dwelt with gloomy satisfaction on self-destruction. It was the third day after leaving the hospital, and I had eaten nothing for two days. I was sick, and dizzy, and faint; the day was dark and dreary; I had been spurned and cursed as an idle rascal when I had humbly implored relief; the river was near; and I made up my mind to put an end to my miserable existence."

"I was hurrying down a narrow street leading to the river, when, by God's mercy, I saw something white and shining lying on the pavement before me. I stooped and picked it up; it was a silver sixpence, Mr. Keenedge—a crooked sixpence, or perhaps it might not have caught my eye."

"I was saved. Without being fully sensible of what I did, I retraced my steps—bought a small loaf at the first baker's shop. I was nearly choked in devouring it, for I was ravenous. I think that I felt grateful for my preservation; and I know that I tried to pray to God for help and mercy."

"Help came, my friend. I was wandering in search of work, when a hand was laid on my arm, and I heard my name uttered in accents and tones of surprise and sorrow. I looked up, and my eyes met those of my former employer. I need not tell you more; need not say that he pitied me and relieved me: he did more; he offered to take me again into his counting house; and when I shrunk from *that*, he found me the situation in which I still remain."

"It was about this time, Mr. Keenedge, that I found my way, accidentally, to Whirlpool Rents, and made your acquaintance."

"Friendship, John; don't say nothink milder than friendship, John," said the little barber; "and proud I am to——"

Mr. Keenedge was cut short in his protestations by a violent noise below, which sounded like the bursting open of a door; and at the same time a voice (at the sound of which the poor clerk turned suddenly pale, and trembled excessively), cried out, in somewhat imperious tones, for a light.

The truth is, if our two friends had not been occupied as they were, and Mr. Keenedge especially, so absorbed and swallowed up in the history to which he was listening; or if the wind had been less boisterous, and the rain less beating, they might, some minutes before, have heard a knocking

and rattling at the barber's closed and locked shop door—increasing in violence, too, until the untimely and pertinacious visitor, whoever he were, made impatient by delay, had put his foot against the frail barrier and forced his way into the deserted regions below.

This startling inbreak was not to be disregarded; and, snatching up the candle, Mr. Keenedge darted through the doorway and down the narrow stairs, forgetting, for the moment, his friend and lodger, whose looks, had Mr. Keenedge observed them, would have betokened some extraordinary tumult of feeling, if not of absolute alarm.

To account for this sudden invasion we must travel back a few hours, and attend for a brief space to the movements of another individual, who has been only slightly introduced into our story as the lodger at Mrs. Brown's, in — Street, and the X. Y. Z. of the advertisement which had given our poor clerk some uneasiness.

#### CHAPTER XXXI.—X. Y. Z.

It was late in the afternoon, then, of that same day, that X. Y. Z., as he pleased to style himself, re-entered London in the interior of a stage-coach—a long stage on one of the great northern roads. This personage has already been described by Mr. Keenedge as an elderly gentleman; and we have little more to add regarding his personal appearance, save that he was reasonably stout, and in apparent good condition, both in flesh and in outward artificial covering. His countenance was honest and good-looking: probably it had even been handsome in earlier days; it was also considerably bronzed, as with long travel in fiercer climates than our cold, cloudy, foggy island; and some shades of thoughtfulness, perhaps also of care and perplexity, were plainly traceable upon it.

The demeanour of the traveller on the long journey, at the end of which he had just arrived, had been singular. That is to say, he had exhibited remarkable fidgetiness, and had worried three successive coachmen out of all reasonable patience, by his complaints of slow driving and stoppages on the road; although he had eventually mollified their fretted tempers by the liberality of his largesses when they resigned their seat on the box to a successor.

The longest day comes to an end at last, however; and it was with an ejaculation of thankfulness and relief that X. Y. Z. sprang for the last time from the coach, and, leaving his luggage at the coach-office, sprang as quickly into a hack conveyance, and ordered the driver to proceed to a certain house in a certain street in the city.

Arrived there, and keeping his carriage still in waiting, he hurried into the house—it was a mercantile place of business—and sought speech of the principal. The interview was protracted; and when at length he left the private room where it had been held, it might have been seen that the stranger was greatly agitated, and that his cheeks were yet moist with tears.

Once more he sprang into the hired vehicle; and this time, the order given to the driver was to make all speed to Peggram's Wharf. Now, the

driver was deficient in his river geography; but either unwilling at once to acknowledge his ignorance, or confounding the name with some obscure premises in connection with the New River, some three or four miles northward, he proceeded thither with his unsuspecting fare; and it was not till nearly an hour had been spent in fruitless wanderings and bootless inquiries, that he confessed his error, and turned the head of his weary horse once more towards the city. And thus it came to pass that when at length Peggram's Wharf was reached, darkness covered it, and the little watch-box of a counting-house was found deserted.

Anathematizing, or otherwise venting his vexation against all stupid hackney coachmen and blundering incompetents, the testy traveller incautiously and hastily, and unadvisedly, dismissed his vehicle, and began to make inquisition in the immediate neighbourhood of the wharf, respecting a certain clerk at Peggram's, whom he mentioned by name.

For a long time he was unsuccessful in his researches. Those of whom he inquired, being mostly small shopkeepers in the dirty and dusky lane which bordered on the river, and who dealt principally in dried fish and what they called marine stores, were either unable or unwilling to give the information required by X. Y. Z. At length the bribe of half-a-sovereign quickened the perceptions and opened the mouth of the proprietor of a small coffee shop close at hand. He did not know any man of that name, certainly, he said; but there was a clerk at Peggram's—he might say, *the* clerk, for there was not another, whose name he did not know, only that he was called John, and who regularly had his cup of coffee and his bit of dinner, such as it was, there; and may be that was the man the gentleman was asking about.

"Where does he live? can you tell me that?" demanded X. Y. Z., impetuously.

"That depends," said the man, scratching his head doubtfully. "What may you be wanting of him, sir? because I would not have any harm come to him through me."

"Harm! harm! Bless the man! harm!" exclaimed X. Y. Z., in such visible perturbation that suspicion had not a foot to stand upon.

"I see, sir; I beg your pardon; but you won't blame me for being cautious: I didn't know; and as I do happen to know where he lives—John, I mean——"

In a moment the half sovereign had changed hands.

"Whirlpool Rents is the place, sir," said the man, with a jerk; "but you'll never find the place alone. If you'll trust yourself with me, sir, I'll take you to his lodgings."

"Good!" said X. Y. Z.

And there, at length, he arrived; and, after dismissing his guide, the stranger began rattling at Mr. Keenedge's door: with what effect we have already seen.

The little barber and X. Y. Z. stared at each other with looks of comical surprise and wonder; that is, they would have been comical but for an overpowering anxiety on the face of the stranger. Mr. Keenedge was the first to speak.



"Goodness me, sir! Who would have thought! If you had only sent me word round, sir, I would have slipped on my hat and apron. And to think of your being come back—"

"I didn't know that you lived here, Mr. Keenedge," said X. Y. Z., faintly; "and it is not you that I want now. Where is HE?"

"He, sir!"—(The man's mad, and got loose from his keepers, said the little barber to himself, breaking out into a cold perspiration. I must speak him fair, or else he'll be after doing for his-self with a razor.)—"He, sir; yes, sir. But, I beg your pardon humbly, who, sir?"

At that moment a groan or a cry from the room above smote upon the ears both of Mr. Keenedge and his untimely visitor. The effect was decisive. Without wasting another thought on X. Y. Z., and leaving the entire stock in trade, razors included, at his mercy, the little barber sprang backwards and hastened up the narrow staircase, surmounting two or three of the steep steps at every stride. But, rapid as were his movements, those of X. Y. Z. were equally prompt, so that they entered the poor clerk's chamber almost together.

The poor clerk had sunk on to his knees; his face was hidden in his hands; he was moaning as though in pain.

"See what you have done, Mr. Owen!" exclaimed the little barber, reproachfully (for it came into his mind then, that none but the wicked tempter could have sought his poor friend, or, finding him, could have so shaken his fortitude). "You had ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir," he added, as he stooped down, and was about to raise his friend and to cover him with his protection. But a gentle trembling hand was laid upon his arm. "A BROTHER'S hand must raise him now, and a BROTHER'S arm will support him." And, quietly putting the kind-hearted little man aside, the mysterious X. Y. Z., as he said this, knelt by the poor clerk; and presently their hands were clasped in each other; and when they rose from their lowly posture, the strong arm of the stranger was encircling his brother.

Ah, Crooked Sixpence! your histories are for this time ended. The poor clerk has other matters to think about now—other stories to hear and to tell.

It was soon known in Whirlpool Rents that Mr. Keenedge's lodger had been sought and found by a brother, the brother Sam, who left England so many, many years ago because he was crossed in love, and who had been supposed long dead. Where he had been in all those years no one could exactly say, but rumour ascribed to him untold wealth to a fabulous amount; and it was whispered that not only was the poor clerk to be released from his drudgery at Peggram's Wharf, and transferred to a home of luxury and profusion, but that Mr. Keenedge's fortune was also made. And, strange as it may seem, envy found but little to say on the subject; for the kind-hearted barber, and his quiet inoffensive lodger, were and always had been in good odour with their still poorer neighbours.

Whether all the rumours just mentioned were strictly correct or not we cannot affirm. We may

say, however, that, a few weeks after the eventful evening of which we have spoken, both the poor clerk and his landlord disappeared from Whirlpool Rents, Mr. Keenedge having disposed of the goodwill of his business and his small stock in trade. For a long time the Whirlpool Renters were profoundly ignorant of what had become of their old neighbour; but after a time it was currently reported that the little barber had been seen presiding over a hair-dressing *emporium* in a fashionable suburb some three or four miles from St. Paul's Cathedral, and that his name was over the door. It was reported, also, that the first and second floors of the large house over the *emporium* were occupied by two bachelor brothers, who were so completely strangers to all around them that their very names were a mystery, and they were known only by the familiar designation (it was their own whim) of brother Sam and brother John.

Of brother Sam it was believed that he had spent the greater part of his life abroad, where he had amassed considerable property, and that his leisure life, after returning home, was employed in works of benevolence. Especially was he known as a frequent visitor of prisons, and as the ready friend of such as had fallen into error and crime, but who professed repentance and a desire to redeem the future. Brother Sam was accustomed to vindicate himself from the sneers sometimes cast upon him on this account, by reminding the sneerer of the words of the Divine Master, "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Of brother John, it was understood that he had engagements in the city, which occupied the greater part of his time. He usually returned home, however, before the evening set in; and in summer the two elderly bachelors were to be seen walking together in the neighbouring fields arm-in-arm, and in close converse. In winter their evenings were spent much together; but it was known that brother John had a little study or library of his own at the top of the house, to which he frequently resorted before retiring to rest; and it was reported that he was engaged in some literary work. We will not vouch for the truth of this; but it may be that, at the time this was said, the poor clerk (*poor clerk no longer*) was preparing for the press his *Story of a Crooked Sixpence*.

#### THE GREAT TOBACCO NUISANCE.

It is now about two centuries and a half ago since King James First (of England) wrote his famous "Counterblast against Tobacco." What was a new vice then—an imported appetite, injurious to health, and destructive of habits of industry—has now grown into the dimensions of a gigantic public nuisance. The smoker, unlike most other victims of excessive self-indulgence, is a pest to others as well as an enemy to himself. The opium-eater is a quiet, harmless, self-made idiot in a cellar; the noisy drunkard is generally kept in check by the law; and the glutton is soon rendered unobtrusive by heavy sleep; but the smoker sits in fumes that are agreeable to his laboriously-acquired taste, and

offensive to those who have not learned to defeat the laws of nature. The laws of society are paralyzed when their arm is stretched forth to strike him, because tobacco is all-powerful on the bench; and those who are appointed to carry out their empty orders have more sympathy with the offender than the offended. Who ever heard of smoking in railway carriages being more than "prohibited;" or of that select ground "abaft the funnel" being actually preserved from the encroachments of this nuisance? Who ever had the moral courage to stand up in a party of travellers, and refuse that sanction to be half choked, which is only asked for as a matter of form?

The inveterate smoker is the most selfish of men. He thinks of nothing but his beloved habit at all times, in all companies, and all seasons. Ladies, invalids, and tender infants, are no barrier to his indulgence, and he has the heart of an ogre if not the appetite. He leaves a trail behind him by which he can always be traced, and he will flavour a house, or a public building, as strongly as a broken sewer does. Wherever he sits for a few hours, he is sure to leave his mark by making the atmosphere heavy and poisonous, and filling the furniture with the rank smells of his idolized weed. Windows may be thrown open, and fancy perfumes may be introduced, but all in vain. The room once thoroughly impregnated with tobacco-smoke can never be cleansed. Its very tone will deepen and change in spite of all the resources of the decorator's art, and by degrees it will sink into the melancholy aspect of a liquorice-coloured den.

The conversation of the inveterate smoker is never brilliant, and his company is more exacting than amusing. He will sit in solemn silence, like one of those eastern fanatics whom we term *yogis*, receiving all you like to tell him with a self-satisfied, clouded, impassible face, and giving no speech in return. The social qualities of tobacco are always grossly over-rated, and no company was ever improved by its drowsy influence. Heavy stupor, in such assemblies, takes the place of wit, and a half-drunken slowness of delivery is the counterfeit presentment of wisdom.\*

Tobacco smokers can command a large majority in most circles of society, and no one ever asks what substance is lighted and sucked into nothingness, as long as it is called "tobacco," and produces smoke. One man may puff a mild cigar that is costly and unadulterated; another may fill a black pipe with a coarse and nauseous mixture; and though the first may be comparatively inoffensive, while the second is poisonous and suffocating, the same liberty to become a nuisance is accorded to both. Nearly one half of all the tobacco sold, and all the cigars manufactured, is largely adulterated,

\* The pipe, with solemn interposing puff,  
Makes half a sentence at a time enough;  
The dozing sages drop the drowsy strain,  
Then pause, and puff—and speak, and pause again.  
Such often, like the tube they so admire,  
Important triflers! have more smoke than fire.  
Pernicious weed! whose scent the fair annoys,  
Unfriendly to society's chief joys,  
Thy worst effect is banishing for hours  
The sex, whose presence civilizes ours," etc., etc.

Cooper's "Conversation."

and with such noxious ingredients as nitrate of potash, sulphate of magnesia, ammonia, alum, and carbonate of lime! Knowing this—without regarding the warning heart-sickness which nature has set at the very threshold of this habit, how can we question the opinion of those numerous medical authorities who have told us that smoking, much or little, is injurious to bodily health?

It is hopeless for the persecuted minority who never smoke, to attempt to stop this nuisance by argument, appeals to reason, or the aid of the law; and only one course, as a humorous friend suggests, appears to be left open. This is to invent some retaliating odour, twice as offensive as tobacco smoke, and by using it unsparingly in opposition, so drive the disgusted and disgusting enemy out of the field!

#### ARTHUR AND THE ROUND TABLE.

How shall we treat him? Deferentially; as a true historic personage, the stamp of whose broad features was taken by the soft clay of the age in which he lived, and then hardened into irregular proportions by the slow lapse of time? Or shall he be treated as a splendid myth, a brilliant mirage, the portentous child of mist and sunlight? Most certainly we shall hold Arthur the Briton to be a fact in history; for one cannot bring one's self to believe that his name, which was owned for ages as the very talisman of chivalry, and was long acknowledged by the historian in the calm retirement of his laborious cell, is but an imaginative rumour, a wandering echo from the chord of some visionary bard. We are aware that we are *approaching* the "debatable ground" of romance, but will endeavour soberly to keep the beaten track of probability, and not indulge ourselves in a *détour* into the shadowy land of fable, through which the old chroniclers, led by Geoffry of Monmouth, or the old minstrels in the following of "Maister Wace," would be our ready guides.

Many writers of modern days, sorely discomfited by the bewildering mazes in which these questionable authorities have entangled them, have found it the easiest way to decide that such a hero of the marvellous as our Arthur never lived. But this is a pusillanimous way of escaping from a difficulty, unworthy of the courage of modern chivalry. It may be the shortest, but it is not the most sagacious mode, to take refuge in unbelief, merely because the outlines of an object are too large for our standard of measurement. Those who dwell in a mountainous region are aware that atmosphere, in its misty moments, sometimes plays strange freaks with sober realities, magnifying them into giants, distorting them into monsters, and making truth its very toy. Thus also, in arctic regions, ships are sometimes seen, and not phantom ones either, apparently sailing, keel upwards, through the clouds. Captain Scoresby saw his father's vessel thus inverted, when it was some fifty miles distant. A highly refracting state of the atmosphere accounts for the phenomenon. Let us then try to obtain a truthful view of the person of Arthur, although his propor-

tions and attitudes may seem to be the reverse of probable, as seen through the mists of antiquity and the refracting medium of old romance.

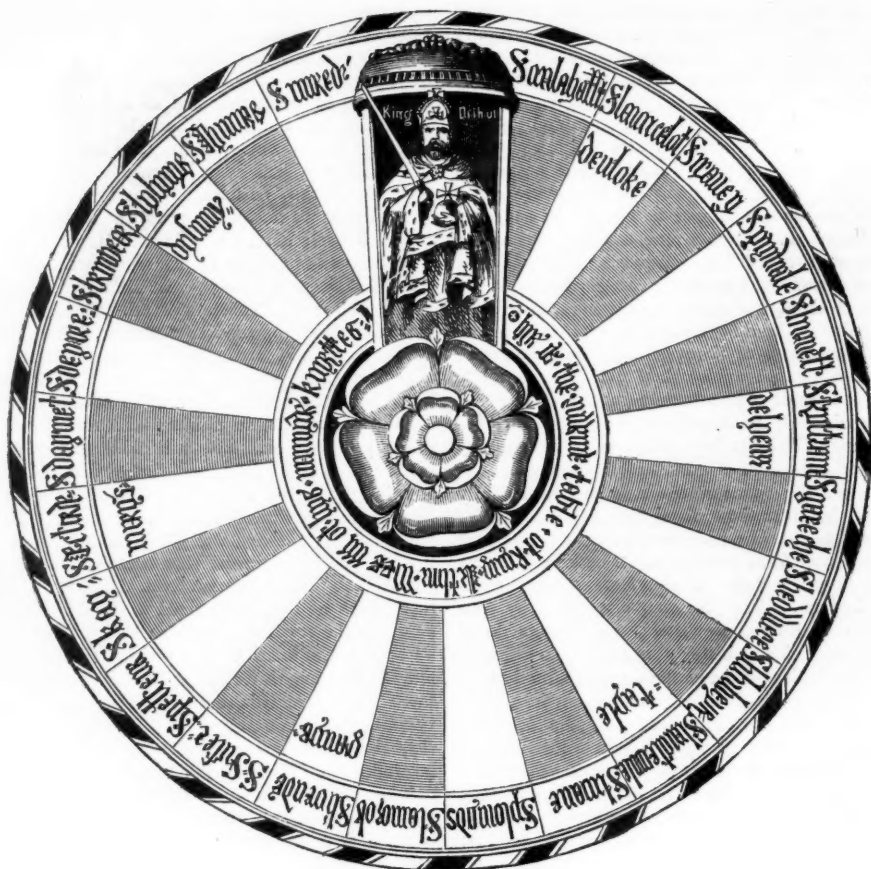
And first let us bestow a cursory glance at the state of our island at the period when Arthur stepped boldly out upon its troubled plains. Branches of the Cimmerian and Celtic races had hitherto composed its population, while occasional visits to its shores appear to have been made by the Phœnicians when engaged in their bold commercial enterprises. Then Rome enrolled Britain in the proud lists of her conquests; her military roads and walls traversed the savage haunts of the painted children of the woods, and the Roman altar displaced the Druid's cromlech. At length the haughty mistress of the world, whose hands were now full of home troubles, had found it needful to loosen the bands of her distant captive; and as the broad pinions of the Roman eagle disappeared from the shores of Britain, her coasts were darkened by the coming shadows of other and wilder foes.

But first the peace of the land had been sorely troubled by incursions from the Celtic tribes of Picts and Scots, who came swarming over the wall of Antoninus from amidst the Scottish hills, as soon as they heard the retiring footsteps of the imperial legions. The Britons, enervated by four centuries of Roman servitude, were incapable of self-defence. They bitterly regretted the departure of their iron-handed lords; and after having in vain appealed to Rome for assistance, in a moving epistle entitled, "The Groans of the Britons," they concluded to send a deputation into Germany to invoke the aid of the Saxons. In the dark pine forests, and amidst the perpetual disturbances of the Germanic Continent, a remarkable people had been educating, which was destined to produce an abiding effect upon the civil institutions and social structure of our island. Rude as were the Anglo-Saxons, when they sallied forth from their forest homes and landed on the British coasts, they nevertheless brought with them the germs of those great ideas which afterwards expanded into political and judicial institutions of so high an order of practical excellence. These great thoughts did not grow up from some classic root that had wandered over from Greece, nor did they spring from seed drilled into the earth by the iron tread of Rome. They were the native growth of a new and vigorous soil; and though their expansion was at first checked by the briars of surrounding barbarism, they at length attained a degree of stability which Greece and Rome never knew. Yes; it is the Anglo-Saxon race which has done the work of the world; but this is because a purer form of Christianity than has elsewhere prevailed, has given to that race a lofty mission to fulfil. Would that it had been more faithful to its trust!

The Saxon invasion—for, having once seen our "best of islands," as old Geoffrey of Monmouth rightly styles it, the strangers were not at all disposed to go home again—the Saxon invasion necessarily entailed upon England a long period of desolating wars. But if we withdraw our eye from the painful process of conquest, and fix it upon the result, we shall see that an amended state of social

and political existence was the consequence. The Saxons had occasionally visited the British shores on their predatory excursions, for the last two hundred years; but they had never sat down to rest—never looked upon the land as a fitting building-site for future empire. Towards the close of the fifth century, however, Cerdic headed an invasion which, after a lengthened struggle, ended in the founding of the West Saxon kingdom.

And now we first meet with the romantic name of our British hero. Cerdic the Saxon, about the year 520, was pushing his conquests westward, and had laid siege to Badon, near Bath, where the retiring Britons had made a stand. These, in their extremity, had appealed to "Arthur, Prince of the Silures," to aid them against the common foe. Now Arthur, say the old chroniclers, had inherited from his father Uther the office of Pendragon, a dignity paramount in power and station to all the other petty kings. The minstrels add, that the birth of Arthur had been concealed, but that Merlin, the great magician, who knew his royal lineage, had produced the famous sword "Excalibar," amidst the circle of rival candidates to the throne, and had decreed that whatever hand could wrench the mystic weapon from the block of stone, into which he had firmly fixed it, should be the one to wield the sceptre as well as to hold the sword. Of course, the hand of the young Arthur was the one fated to loosen Excalibar from its stony setting. For the truth of this picturesque story we offer no vouchers, for none are to be had. Sober history says that there was a great fight before the walls of Badon, and that Badon was relieved. Cerdic, checked in mid career, consequently retires before the British forces. But he is not rooted out of the land, he is only arrested in his conquering course; for we find that he is able to bequeath Wessex as an heirloom to his posterity. As Arthur never succeeds in dislodging the foe, he could not have been the hero girded with resistless might and dowered with far-sweeping dominion over sea and land, such as Geoffrey and his followers have loved to represent him. Indeed, the Welsh bards have generally spoken of him in terms of moderate admiration; and Llywarch the Aged, who had been guest at his table and friend in council, speaks of him with the deference due to his superior endowments, but not as a warrior gifted with supernatural powers. This gives a greater air of truthfulness to his story. A long struggle ensued upon the relief of Badon, not only against the discomfited Saxons, but also against the Picts and Scots from the north. Arthur was not always successful, but the general result was in his favour. Geoffrey of Monmouth declares that he not only subdued Scotland, but that he added to his rule Ireland, the Orkneys, some parts of Gaul and Norway, and even that strange outlying gem of the northern seas, the fiery and frozen Iceland. But we must not allow our imagination to take such far flights as these. Suppose we confine ourselves to our British islands and to their sister Brittany, allowing Arthur to make an occasional summer excursion with his bold "Knights of the Round Table," in search of stirring adventure upon wider fields of chivalry.



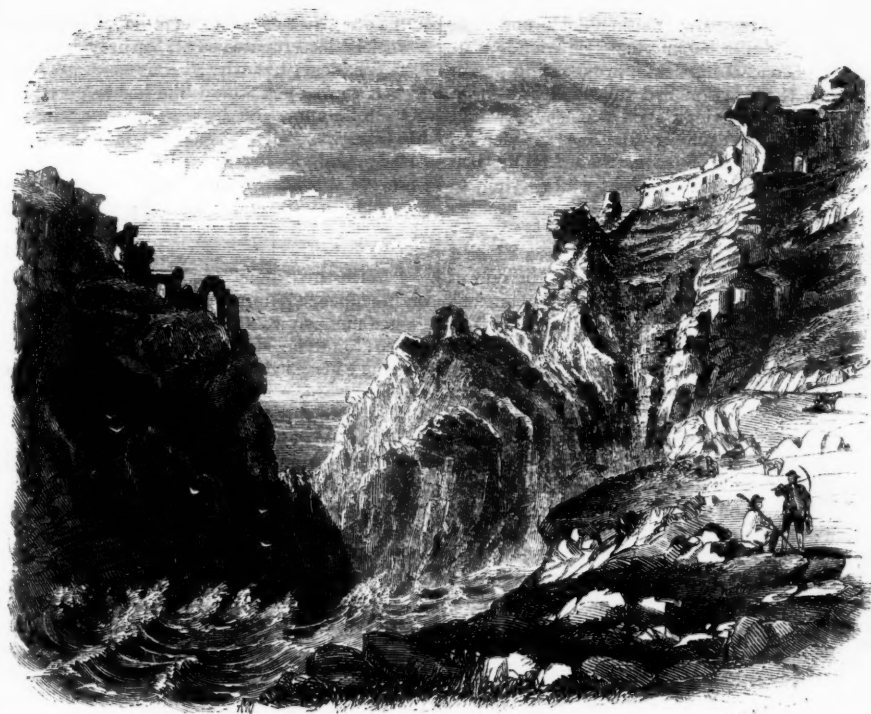
ROUND TABLE PRESERVED IN WINCHESTER CASTLE.

And now, as to the famous "Round Table." The tradition is this: that Arthur used to feast his knights at a circular board, in order to avoid all troublesome questions of precedence; and that these doughty paladins used to enter the banquetting hall each at a separate door, advance to his appointed seat, and immediately strike his dagger into the table, where it stood erect during the continuance of the feast. But there was one vacant seat, and *never* was it filled; for it was reserved for him who should be successful in the "quest for the *sang real*" when on his adventurous pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Many a brave knight left his bones to bleach on the hot sands of Syria, impelled by the mysterious promise of that empty seat at the round table, and by the hopeless yearning to rescue the precious relic from the unworthy hands of the infidel. A vain dream of superstition, you will say, and say rightly too. But it was the age of day-dreams, and anything which lifted the captive mind above the gross realities of surrounding life and the unscrupulous pursuits of personal ambition, may be compassionately looked upon as a moral help, in a day of such thick darkness.

There is a singular relic of unquestionable antiquity preserved in the Chapel of Winchester

Castle. It is a massive oaken board, lined off into many divisions. In one compartment is painted a regal figure, and, encircling a large rose in the centre, is the legend, "Thys is the rounde table of King Arthur, and of his valyant knyghtes." The board is pierced in many places, not, we presume, by the points of the knightly daggers, but by the veritable bullets of Cromwell's soldiers, who made a target of the vain and fabulous thing. Caxton, in his "Booke of the Noble Historyes of Kynge Arthur, and of certeyn of his Knyghtes," 1485, declares that at Winchester you may see the Round Table; and Paulus Jovius records that Henry VIII, when the Emperor Charles v visited England, displayed this board to him as the identical table of Arthur the Briton. He further states, that many marks of its antiquity had become obliterated; that the board had been newly repaired, and the names of the knights had been written on it afresh. But of course a commission of historical inquiry has sat upon this remarkable board, as upon many another vexed question of the past, and the result has been that the claims of Arthur to the ownership of the table have been upset, and the relic has been referred to the more modern days of our King Stephen, when some similar difficulties in





SITE AND RUINS OF KING ARTHUR'S CASTLE, IN CORNWALL.

the science of precedence were met in the same ingenious manner. Stow says that King Arthur kept his round table at "diverse places," but especially at Carlion, Winchester, and Camelot in Somersetshire. But for ages after he fell to dust, its memory was preserved by a phrase used in chivalry; for the proclaiming of a tournament was henceforth termed "holding a round table." In a field near Eamont Bridge, about a mile and a half from Penrith, and consequently not far removed from Arthur's own "merrie Carleile," there is to be seen a circular area, surrounded by a mound and fosse, which still bears the name of "King Arthur's Round Table."

From a bold headland on the northern coast of Cornwall a very remarkable rocky promontory runs bravely out into the surging sea. It is bound on to the mainland by a low and narrow band of bridge-like rock. Lines of very old masonry, with here a loop-hole and there a crumbling doorway, are firmly cemented into the living rock all down the face of the headland, and up the side and brow of the projecting crag. They say that a drawbridge in the olden time sprung across from the one to the other. The walls are in some places so massive as to allow a passage to run along through their thickness; and sternly must their strength have been tested by centuries of driving storms. And this is called "King Arthur's Castle"—his traditional birthplace, and his Cornish home. The rocks and the little patches of matted turf are so slippery and so steep, that he must have a steady eye and a firm step who would venture down upon

the natural bridge and up aloft upon the bold castellated rock. The sea-fowl are swooping round his forehead, and screaming shrill defiance into his ear. The booming wind seems bent upon plunging him into the green swell of the sea far below, which is veined like marble by lines of retreating foam-belts, or broken into sudden shivers by the wild reflux of some master wave. His eyes are now blinded by a shower of foam, which is capriciously flung into his face like a blast of driving smoke. A fragment is loosened by his foot, and bounds sharply from rock to rock until it plunges madly into the gulf, which welcomes it with a passing burst of foamy gladness. But the sound of the deep organ-toned winds, and of the hoarse wild chant of the waves as they "clap their hands" in their strength, who shall venture to describe it in puny words? We must resolve it all into the majestic power of the Creator, and take refuge in the words of Scripture: "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea;" and "It is he who bringeth the wind out of his treasures."

It was at Camlan, not far from his own wave-washed Tintagel, that Arthur received his death-wound in conflict with his rebel nephew Mordred, in the year 542. Being mortally wounded, and almost all his knights slain in the fight, he was conveyed in a vessel from the Cornish shore as far as the River Uzella, in Somersetshire. His sister, abbess of the convent at Glastonbury, eagerly

undertook his cure. But neither love nor skill could heal the dying monarch. His friends contrived long to conceal his death, propagating a vain rumour that the warrior had departed but for a season to some mysterious spot, whence he would return to lead the pining Britons to victory. Mathew of Westminster says, that Arthur had purposely withdrawn out of sight while dying, to prevent the triumph of his foes, and to escape from the officious grief of his friends.

The discovery of his tomb may be treated as a matter of historic certainty. Henry II, in one of his visits to Wales, had been told by an ancient bard of Arthur's place and manner of burial. The king consequently conferred with the abbot and monks of Glastonbury; he intimated that the body had been laid at a great depth beneath the sod, in order to preserve it from Saxon molestation, and that two pillars would mark the identical spot. Two pillars were, in fact, still standing in the burial-ground of the abbey, and in digging betwixt these they came upon a leaden cross, bearing this inscription: "Hic jacet sepultus inclitus rex Arturius in insula Avalonia."

Camden gives us an engraving of the cross in his "Britannia." Sixteen feet beneath the surface was discovered a coffin, containing bones of more than common size. Giraldus says that the bones of one of Arthur's wives also lay near, but distinct from his. There were tresses of her yellow hair, apparently in perfect preservation. The hand of an attendant monk eagerly seized the soft and silken relic, but it instantly fell to dust between his fingers. The bones were removed from their deep rest, and deposited in a splendid shrine before the high altar of Glastonbury Church. Robert of Gloucester describes this sumptuous tomb. Once again was the repose of the dead disturbed to gratify royal curiosity. The shrine was opened in the year 1276, to afford Edward I and his queen a view of the relics of our British hero; and once more were they reverently restored to the tomb's keeping, wrapped in gorgeous vestments—a strange mockery of poor mortality.

The splendid abbey of Glastonbury is now a mouldering but beautiful ruin, and probably never again will it be asked by king or queen, monk or bard, Where lie the bones of Arthur the Briton?

#### THE HOME SAVINGS BANK.

"How much I should like to go!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, as she glanced at an advertisement in the first sheet of the "Times," whilst her husband lingered at the breakfast table perusing the graver portion of the journal.

"What is it, my dear?" he inquired, surprised by her animated tone into looking up from the report of a debate on the budget.

"It is the announcement of Signor Aldiberonto's 'Marvels and Mystery; or, Two Hours of Modern Magic,'" she replied, "and it is but half-a-crown each, entrance—his last night but two—we certainly ought to go."

"Your sister comes to us to-day, I believe, to stay a week?" interrogated Mr. Mowbray.

"Yes, dear; but why?"

"Of course you would like her to go with us—"

"Oh! Henry, you are too generous," interrupted his wife.

"Stop, stop," he rejoined smiling, "you do not know what I am going to say. Three half-crowns would be seven and sixpence; and the cab fare there and back—?"

"Is only a shilling each way," replied his wife.

"With three people it would then probably be eighteenpence," he resumed, "which, with the entrance money, would make ten shillings and sixpence;" and he stopped short in his speech, and resumed his parliamentary debate, without adding another word.

Mrs. Mowbray looked at him earnestly for a minute.

"Shall we go, my dear?" she asked, as she rose from her chair.

"No, wifey, not to-night;" and, although he said it gently, she knew he meant it, and, like a sensible woman, did not repeat the request, but left the room to commence her daily household duties.

Before going to his office in the city that morning, Mr. Mowbray stepped into his own little study behind the dining-room, shut the door, and, drawing his purse from his pocket, took thence a bright half-sovereign and a sixpence. These he dropped into a small canvas bag taken out of the drawer of his writing-table, and carefully replacing it, and locking the drawer, he put his bunch of keys into his pocket, and with a familiar smile walked out of the room.

What could it mean?

Miss Benson came early, and she and her sister had a very agreeable walk before dinner in the pretty neighbourhood of their suburban cottage; then the dinner hour found Mr. Mowbray with them again, so cheerful and entertaining that the whole evening passed away without his wife once thinking of the "modern magic" she had so longed to go to.

A few days after this, Mr. Mowbray proposed to his wife that they should pay a visit to her father and mother, who lived about two miles distant.

"I should like it exceedingly," she answered; "you are always thoughtful and kind, dear Henry; Susan can fetch a cab to the door by the time I am dressed."

"I propose that we should walk there, Jenny, it is such a fine afternoon."

"It is hardly worth while, Henry; the fare is only a shilling, and the same back at night."

"We can come home in the omnibus, wifey."

"And so save sixpence," she rejoined, somewhat sarcastically.

"Even so," he replied with his firm gentleness; "go and put on your bonnet, Jenny; the walk across the park will do us more good than riding in a close smoky cab."

Mrs. Mowbray obeyed, and as she passed upstairs to prepare for their walk, her husband entered his little study. Again the purse and canvas bag were both drawn forth, and two silver coins passed from one into the other.

Several times during the next few weeks there

were similar conversations, and the same subsequent mysterious pantomime of transferring small sums of money from a leathern receptacle to a canvas one.

"This is Jeannette's birthday," said Mrs. Mowbray to her husband one morning, as her two eldest children entered to breakfast. "Go and kiss papa, Jeannie, and tell him that to-day you begin to be 'miss in her teens.'"

"Ay, indeed!" said her father, as he smoothed her hair and kissed the youthful cheek glowing with health and good-humour, "time travels at such a rapid pace that it is quite an effort to track its progress. Thirteen to-day, eh! Jeannette? well, we certainly ought to celebrate such an important event. What say you, wifey, to a trip to the Crystal Palace to-day, as a birthday treat?"

"It would be very delightful," she answered, "but I fear will be too expensive to indulge in; our party must necessarily be a large one. There are you and I, the four children, my sister Mary, and the nurse—altogether eight in number."

"Well 'tis but two shillings apiece, to include railway tickets and entrance money." He looked rather sly as he spoke.

"Then there is the omnibus fare to the station, and back," rejoined his wife, who seemed all at once to have changed characters with him.

"And that is *only* sixpence apiece each way," he returned, still somewhat in a jesting tone.

"Altogether, with taking some refreshment there, it would cost more than thirty shillings—nearly two pounds—and that is more than we can afford for one day's pleasure, is it not, Henry?"

"Unless you will treat us all out of your savings, which you can do if you choose," he replied.

"*I! savings!* I wish I could—I don't know what you are thinking of, Henry." She felt and looked a little vexed.

"Will you do it if I prove that you can?" he inquired.

"With pleasure; but it is a marvel to me *how* you will prove it; you are dealing in mysteries."

"Ah! exactly so—" marvels and mystery; that first gave me the notion; wait a minute, Jenny, and you shall see some of my 'modern magic' produce more agreeable and tangible results than those of the professor with the hard name." He went out of the room, and returned quickly.

"Now, then, prepare," he exclaimed jocosely—"Heigh! Presto!" and he drew a small canvas bag from his coat pocket, and untying it, poured its shining contents of gold and silver on the table before the eyes of his wondering wife and children.

"There, my dear," he continued gaily, "that money is all your own—the product of the sundry '*'tis but*'s and '*only*'s, which I have persuaded you these last few weeks not to spend in various trifles we could do without. I believe you will find sufficient to pay our whole expenses of to-day."

Mrs. Mowbray blushed as well as smiled at her husband's explanation about his "treasure trove," but to his surprise she said: "Well, Henry, I don't see much advantage in spending all this money at once, instead of at different times. It will be only used in pleasure after all; for the children are too

young to obtain much instruction at the Crystal Palace, and a play in Kensington Gardens would be far better, as far as health is concerned.

"I know, papa," interposed Jeannette, "what I would like to do with my share of the money—I mean, with what my day's pleasure would cost."

"Say what it is, my child; as it is your birthday, you shall have your choice."

"Old Susan, nurse's mother, said the other day she would so like to have a large Bible, for her eyes were failing, and she could not see small print as once she could. I would like to give her one."

This kind and thoughtful proposal was hailed with warm approval, and Mr. Mowbray said it would be a capital plan to hold a family council for the disposal of the funds of what he would call "THE HOME SAVINGS BANK." To give the others time for considering what they would propose, he would wait till nearer the close of the year, when a good sum would certainly have accumulated.

We have not heard the results of this family council, but have no doubt that the money was voted for objects as unselfish and as praiseworthy as that proposed by Jeannette.

Ah! if more of us would but save up our selfish '*'tis but*'s and our thoughtless '*only*'s, in the shape of misspent shillings and sixpences, we might possess the means of doing many a kind and generous deed, and procure lasting good for ourselves and others.

## THE BLACK COUNTRY.

A SPONGE FOR THE BLACK COUNTRY.

"TELL me, I say, do you folks here ever die?" So spoke a puddler from the Black Country. His accustomed oven-like atmosphere had for a few hours been exchanged for the fresh exhilarating air of the lovely hills in Worcestershire; and, as he gazed on the enchanting prospect which on all sides met his view, and tasted the unwonted luxury of summer breezes in the country, he abandoned himself to the intoxication of the moment, and capered about with the wild delight of a liberated school-boy. "I wonder if you ever die! Only let me have *this* air, these hills, this picture to look at, and I'll live as long as *you like*, as long as *you like*, as long as *you like*;" accompanying his expressions with frantic gesticulations, and raising his voice at the end of every clause, till it reached almost a screaming pitch. "But *we*," in a subdued and saddened tone, "we live in the fires!"

These words were addressed, though unconsciously, to the nobleman whose beautiful demesne was bounded by the hills on which the speaker stood. He was one whose personal worth and nobility of mind rendered him a fit representative of ancestors, many of whose names had ranked deservedly high in literature, in art, and in politics.

Lord — had from the first been struck and diverted by the extravagant demonstrations of delight which he witnessed in his humble visitor from the smoke, and the concluding words of his strange address made a deep impression upon him.

"We live in the fires!" And are they not piteous words, calculated to go straight to the

hearts of all who are acquainted with the lives and habits, the privations and sufferings, of those who toil among the mines and iron-works? They remind them of the fiery workshop; of their sensations on first beholding the half-naked form, apparently enveloped by the flames on every side; of manly strength and vigour giving way beneath too strenuous a pressure; of young faces from which all trace of youth or bloom has been obliterated. It is true, indeed, that money is the reward for this expenditure of strength and vital energy; that the great panacea is, in return, not niggardly bestowed; but it is no less true that the wages of premature decay, disease, and death are received along with it. Those too who, in the strictly literal sense of the word, "walk on still in darkness," may fairly claim their share of sympathy and consideration. For this it is not necessary to draw an imaginative or exaggerated picture of the hardships undergone by the pitmen; to describe them (though this has been done) as wretched mortals, for ever excluded from the cheering light of day; beings who, having grovelled away their lives in the blackest depths, are reduced at last to regard the sun as a fable, or a thing to be only distantly remembered. It is quite enough to remember that one half of their working lives is passed in gloom, often in solitude; that their employment is not only in its nature degrading both to mind and body, but attended with infinitely more danger than perhaps any other in which they could be engaged; that during their intervals of rest there is little indeed without, too often less within, to animate or cheer them; that the inspiring influences of pure air, refreshing scents, or lovely scenery, is from them totally withheld; and their claim upon the compassionate interest of dwellers in "pleasant places" can hardly fail to be admitted. Let those whose princely incomes are derived from the toil of these poor miners, think how they can do something for their temporal and spiritual welfare.

A few days only had to elapse before the marriage of my sister. It was evening; and we were sitting together, trying to make much of the little time that remained for intercourse on the old fraternal footing. One other companion we had with us, Mr. Hensley, whose name will be associated with a rather unsuccessful appeal for aid in the parish church of L. R. We were now on terms of intimacy, and he was particularly fond of dilating upon, though Carry was by no means equally fond of hearing, the wonderful performances universally expected from her as the wife of a leading iron-master. On this occasion she was growing almost angry, and at last put a somewhat hurried stop to the alarming picture he was drawing of her future life and duties.

"There, that is quite sufficient, Mr. Hensley; why should you convert me into a missionary against my will? I never said I had any of these good designs or intentions."

"They are attributed to you," he said, "nevertheless; and you must not disappoint our hopes. 'Come over and help us' is the cry sent forth: you cannot be deaf to the appeal."

"I don't see it in that light at all," she replied. "Of course, I wish to do good; but I am neither a clergyman nor a clergyman's wife."

"You may have more power of being useful than if you were," replied Mr. Hensley. "In the first place, you will have money, which goes a great way; in the next place, the very fact of not being *professionally* connected with the district—I mean as a visitor or teacher—will go far towards giving weight to what you say." After a moment's pause he added: "Besides, I have great faith in feminine agency; it always appears to me that the ministry of mercy has been committed in a special manner to your sex."

"Well," said Carry, "I do not think I am the sort of person for the work; I have often remembered with shame the 'white marks' Mr. Trelawny urged me to leave behind. I fear they were very few and far between."

"You must take a sponge with you the next time," said Mr. Hensley, "and apply it well."

"A sponge," said Carry, laughing, "to blot out the Black Country altogether?"

"The frosts forbid," he replied, in the same tone; "what should we do in winter without it?"

"It must be a gigantic sponge indeed," I interposed, "to take much effect in your part of the world. I should imagine even the baths and wash-house system proves a failure there?"

"Not entirely; the comfort of a sudden riddance from seven or eight coats of coal dust is not altogether unappreciated, though the relief may be of short duration. However, *my* sponge is of a gigantic nature, and its effect is proportional."

"What is it Mr. Hensley?" inquired Carry.

"Will you let me write and tell you what it is," he replied, "and how I wish you to apply it?"

"I wish very much you would," she answered; and he did so. Herewith I append an extract from Mr. Hensley's letter.

"It is no light matter to try and cleanse even a small portion of the Black Country. Physically, morally, intellectually, and religiously, all is alike so dark and discouraging, that, uncertain where or how to begin, one is tempted to give all up in despair. A sponge is needed to bear upon it in all these aspects, and we are not quite without one. The BIBLE is to be the gigantic sponge I spoke of. Take it with you, not only as your personal companion and director, but let it be in your hands the powerful instrument of good, which it is intended to be in the hands of all Christians. I shall be much astonished if, under its influence, homes, hands, and faces do not speedily assume a much cleaner, a much brighter aspect.

"Do not say, to begin with, you are not a missionary or a clergyman's wife. You are now the wife of a man who cordially acknowledges the powerful claim that place has upon him to which he owes his wealth and standing in society. Remember that, in his service, *some every year* are suddenly cut off, and called before their Master and yours. Begin, then, with the cottages inhabited by your husband's workmen. Make it your first care to see that there is a Bible in every house, and you will be surprised at the number that are without



one, even in our Bible country. Do not be afraid, then, to let it *speaks for itself*. I do not mean that, in many cases, comment or explanation is not desirable; but it is a great mistake to forget this truth, 'The entrance of thy words giveth understanding unto the simple.' I must give you one instance of this. A friend of mine was visiting a dying girl. She was totally ignorant, rather deaf, and apparently very stupid. My friend was in the habit of reading the Bible to her, but had little hope that much impression had been made. In her last moments she was with her. Leaning over the girl, whose eyes were already becoming glazed in death, the lady repeated the words, 'I will arise, and go to my Father;' adding, 'You, too, must try and say that, Mary.' To her great astonishment, the dying girl, whose apparent apathy had hitherto distressed her, turned upon her the almost sightless eyes, and said in tones of the deepest feeling, 'I do say them *mainy* and *mainy* a time.'

"Take, then, the word of God as a sponge, a lamp, a guide, however you may designate it; only let its tones be heard, let its influence be felt. Bring its precepts home to the wives and mothers with whom you are brought in contact, and the good effects will soon be universal. Let the children learn to love it in their own homes, and in after life they will not forsake its teaching. Spread the Word of God, with prayer for the Holy Spirit to bring it home to the conscience and heart, and God will honour and bless his own appointed means of grace. You will thus also be doing the best for the social improvement as well as the spiritual welfare of those around you; for 'godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'

"There are now pits belonging to your husband, in which the men meet at stated intervals for prayer and Scripture reading. Try and make this practice more general. A lady's persuasion can often effect what a man's influence fails to do. Try and let there be a Bible in connection with all your husband's mines, and let its use be urged upon the colliers. Then those who sit in darkness will see a great light, and upon those whose working path too often leads into the shadow of death, a saving light will shine.

"And one word more for yourself. While you care for your servants, don't forget your Master. If he gives you prosperity in 'a land whose stones are iron,' see that it is not with you as with many about you, where the iron appears literally to enter into their soul. The late panic in the neighbourhood, and heavy money losses, must have taught many lessons, and to not a few brought vividly home such texts as this: 'Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck until he shall have destroyed thee.' May it be yours rather to prove the faithfulness of promises such as this: 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove

me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.'

## POETICAL ZOOLOGY.

## II.

THE description of the ant, in the book of Proverbs, has been made the foundation for many erroneous views of the habits of the insect, both in poetry and prose, owing to an unauthorized interpretation being put upon it. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." Solomon probably referred to a species with which we are not familiar, certainly to one living in a warmer climate, and consequently not exactly accordant in modes of life with our own. But, waiving this, it will be observed that no mention is made of any particular kind of food collected; and if the idea of storing provision is suggested, no hint is given of its being intended for winter use. Colonel Sykes speaks of a species in India which hoards up in its cell the seeds of grass, and takes the precaution of bringing them to the surface to dry, when wetted by the heavy seasonal rains of the country. Nothing is more common among men than to furnish their larders with more than is requisite for immediate wants, when abundance can be commanded, simply to save trouble. The general sentiment of the passage relative to the ant is, that in the appropriate natural seasons of summer and harvest, when food of all kinds is most readily obtained, the insect is industrious in profiting by favourable opportunities, having both present and prospective wants in view. Let us now attend to some poetical representations.

"First crept  
The parsimonious emmet, provident  
Of future."—Milton.

"Till me, why the ant  
In summer's plenty thinks of winter's want?  
By constant journey careful to prepare  
Her stores, and bringing home the corny ear,  
By what instruction does she bite the grain?  
Lest hid in earth, and taking root again,  
It might elude the foresight of her care."—Prior.

"The sage industrious ant, the wisest insect,  
And best economist of all the field;  
For when as yet the favourable sun  
Gives to the genial earth th' enlivening ray—  
Then to the field she hies, and on her back,  
Burden immense! brings home the *cumbrous corn*:  
Then, many a weary step, and many a strain,  
And many a grievous groan subdued, at length  
Up the huge hill she hardly heaves it home:  
Nor rests she here her providence, but nips  
With subtle tooth the grain, lest from her garner  
In mischievous fertility it steal,  
And back to daylight vegetate its way."—Smart.

"They don't wear their time out in sleeping or play,  
But gather up corn in a sunshiny day,  
And for winter they lay up their stores.  
They manage their work in such regular forms,  
One would think they *foresaw* all the frosts and the storms,  
And so brought their food within doors."—Dr. Watts.

There is no element of truth in any of these representations, beyond the bare recognition of the

creature's industry. The ant does not subsist on grain, and much prefers the carcase of a worm to all the wheat in the world, being of carnivorous habit. Neither has it any occasion to lay up winter store, as the greater part of that season is passed in a torpid state, when appetite and eating cease. But ants are observed carrying about their young in the state of *pupa*, or as things wrapped up and swaddled, which both in size and shape have certainly some resemblance to grains of corn. They are also seen occasionally gnawing at the end of one of these bandaged babies, for the purpose of liberating it from confinement. These operations, cursorily judged of according to the mere appearance, gave rise to the corn-bearing imagination for winter use, which Solomon's reference to summer and harvest seemed to sanction; and likewise to the idea of biting the grain to destroy the power of germination. No creatures are more provident of their young than the members of this interesting family, carefully removing them to greater or lesser elevations according to the state of the atmosphere. It is related of the conqueror Timour, that, being forced to take shelter from his enemies in an old ruined building, he had to remain there for some hours alone. Desirous of diverting his mind from his hopeless condition, he watched an ant laboriously endeavouring to carry a *pupa*, or, as he thought it, a grain of corn, larger than itself, up a high wall. Numbering the efforts made to accomplish this object, he found that the load fell sixty-nine times; but the seventieth attempt was successful. "This sight," said he, "gave me courage at the moment, and I have never forgotten the lesson it conveyed." But if indefatigable in peaceful domestic pursuits, the ant is as actively pugnacious; and whole legions will war furiously for the possession of a small heap of earth—an object indeed of not less importance and magnitude to them than a mountain or a river to an emperor. Lord Bacon might have added marauding to the other employments mentioned in his apostrophe: "Alas! the earth, with men upon it, will not seem much other than an ant-hill, where some ants carry food, and some carry their young, and some go empty, and all to and fro around a little heap of dust."

The mole, common all over England, but not known in Ireland, or at the north extremity of Scotland, is often inaccurately represented.

"Pray you, tread softly, that the *blind* mole may not  
Hear a footfall; we now are near his cell."—*Shakespeare*.

"Like a mole, busy and *blind*,  
Works all his folly up, and casts it outward  
To the world's open ear."—*Dryden*.

"What modes of sight betwixt the wide extreme!  
The mole's dim curtain and the lynx's beam."—*Pope*.

Aristotle, the great naturalist of antiquity, twice mentions the mole in the same manner; and there is a species indigenous to the south of Europe totally devoid of sight. But the English mole has all the organs of vision perfect, and is not even dim-sighted. The contrary has been surmised, owing to the eyes being very small, while the subterraneous habits of the animal would seem to render vision almost a superfluous faculty. The sense of hearing is remarkably fine, and of touch delicate; and all mole-

catchers will understand the caution to "tread softly." But the sense of smelling is the most exquisite; and to it the burrower is chiefly indebted for the perception of its food, of its enemies, and of its mate.

Great injustice has been done by mankind to the toad, respecting which some monstrous fictions have been invented, and libels circulated times without number. It was formerly believed that in the head of an old batrachian, one of patriarchal appearance, there was to be found a stone or pearl, to which great virtues were ascribed. Thomas Lupton, in his "First Booke of Notable Things," bears repeated testimony to its existence and value; and to put hunters upon the right track, he gives directions how to proceed to find it. While the progress of natural philosophy has remorselessly destroyed this fantastic conceit, it has deprived of half its beauty Shakespeare's celebrated simile—

"Sweet are the uses of adversity;  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head."

Though the reptile cannot be commended as pleasant to the sight, it does not deserve Pennant's description—himself a naturalist—"the most deformed and hideous of all animals," nor such uncomplimentary poetical phrases as "venomed toads," "loathsome as a toad," "poisonous hunchbacked toads." Milton says of Satan,

"Him they found,  
Squat like a *toad*, close at the ear of Eve,  
Assaying with his devilish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge  
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams;  
Or if, inspiring *venom*, he might taint  
The animal spirits that from pure blood arise.

Not only the bite of the reptile, but its very breath, and even its glance, were deemed by our ancestors to be fraught with mischief, if not with something worse. While such ideas have brought down no little persecution upon it, they have caused many a needless shock to human nerves, on the creature, by no means prone to impertinent intrusions, being unexpectedly encountered. Now the toad is one of the most harmless animals in existence. Let it alone, and it will at once hop out of your way. The fluid which exudes from some parts of the body is innocuous; and its bite—for it may be allowed for toads to bite when attacked—occasions little inconvenience, merely producing at times a slight inflammation. On the other hand, it is very useful in devouring grubs and vermin injurious to plants, and hence enjoys the special protection of the gardener and the florist.

Great scavengers are the star-fishes of the ocean, whose carcases, with the disjointed arms or rays, are so commonly met with on every beach. But more delicate fare than offal is highly relished by them, as muscles and oysters. So notorious is the oyster-eating propensity of these radiata, that fishermen destroy them without mercy. One would think that, not being furnished with an oyster-knife, it would be impossible for such strangely-fashioned creatures to get at their prey, and enjoy the banquet. What citadel apparently more impregnable than the hard and firmly-closed shell of the oyster to a sprawling flexible star-fish! Never-

theless, it is forced and captured, yet not in the manner popularly supposed and thus described:—

"The prickly star-fish creeps with fell deceit  
To force the oyster from his close retreat;  
When gaping lids their widen'd void display,  
The watchful star thrusts in a pointed ray;  
Of all its treasures robs the rifed case,  
And empty shells the sandy hillock grace."

But the oyster is not so silly as to invite, in this way, the entrance of the enemy, gaping as well as napping. It has again been supposed, that the numerous rays of star-fishes found scattered about, are memorials of their own defeat. The impression has prevailed that the oyster, being on the alert, and suspecting the design of the radiate enemy, closes upon him, and holds him fast by the intruding limb. Upon this, the assailant, finding captivity and death inevitable, unless something is done, submits to amputation in order to preserve life and freedom. But the star-fish has no occasion thus to thrust its paws into the mouth of danger. It proceeds in a manner which Professor Rymer Jones has justly termed unique. Having seized upon the prey with its arms, it proceeds coolly to turn its own stomach inside out. It then instils between the shelly valves some torpifying fluid, which deprives the inmate of strength, and soon compels it to open the doors of its dwelling. This done, the star-fish pushes in its stomach, which envelops the oyster, and uncourtously digests it in its own shell.

On some parts of the coast a common species of star-fish is known by the name of "Five-fingered Jack," in allusion to the number of the rays, which, though not universal, is dominant, and led Sir Thomas Browne to query, "Why, among sea-stars, Nature chiefly delighteth in five points?" a question still open for discussion, but with the certainty of debate being unprofitable. In Ireland, the name of the "devil's hands," or the "devil's fingers," is in use, and children have a superstitious dread of touching them. Upon Dr. Drummond, of Belfast, drying some in the garden behind his lodgings, he found his operations anxiously watched by a few urchins, who were saying, "What's the gentleman doing with the bad man's hands? Is he ganging to eat the bad man's hands, do ye think?" While the rays are very readily detached, by the mere action of the waves, after death, some species have the remarkable power of self-dismemberment. On being captured, they proceed unceremoniously to dissolve themselves, and fall in pieces, to the disappointment of the exulting naturalist who has dredged them up, as if under the influence of intense alarm, or highly indignant at being taken. Brittle stars, indeed! It would be a somewhat parallel case, if an individual, when arrested in the streets, were to throw his arms and legs upon the pavement, and jerk off his head for the astonished policeman to catch.

From an early date, a mollusc common in the Mediterranean, the paper nautilus or argonaut, has been frequently referred to as having given to mankind the first example of the art of navigation. It is one of the many-armed class, and is usually represented with six arms extended over the sides of the shell, as if to act as oars, and two arms, which

have broad discs upraised, as if to act as sails. Much beautiful poetry has been devoted to the celebration of a zoological error.

"Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,  
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale."—Pope.

"Light as a flake of foam upon the wind,  
Keel upward from the deep emerged a shell,  
Shaped like the moon ore half her horn is filled;  
Fraught with young life, it righted as it rose,  
And moved at will along the yielding water.  
The native pilot of this little bark  
Put out a tier of oars on either side,  
Spread to the wafting breeze a two-fold sail,  
And mounted up and glided down the billow  
In happy freedom, pleased to feel the air,  
And wander in the luxury of light."—Montgomery.

"The tender Nautilus who steers his prow,  
The sea-born sailor of his shell canoe,  
The ocean Mah, the fairy of the sea,  
Seems far less fragile, and, alas! more free.  
He, when the lightning-winged tornadoes sweep  
The surge, is safe—his post is in the deep—  
And triumphs o'er the armadas of mankind,  
Which shake the world, yet crumble in the wind."—Byron.

The nautilus never moves in the manner here described. It can creep along the bottom of the deep. It can rise to the surface and float, moving backwards through the water like other cuttle-fish. But the arms are not used as oars, and those which have the expanded membranous disc are never hoisted as sails. The sole purpose of these limbs is the secretion of the substance of the shell, both for its repair when injured, and the enlargement which the growth of the animal may require.

In the fossiliferous rocks, the nautilus occurs among the earliest traces of the world's animal life. It continued through the long ages during which the family of its congener, the ammonite, was created, flourished, and became extinct. This fact, with the existence of species of the same genus at present, is the subject of some graceful lines by Mrs. Howitt, but not accurate as to the formation of the stratified rocks, the habits of the mollusc, or the disappearance of its cousin-german:—

"Thou didst laugh at sun and breeze,  
In the new created seas;  
Thou wast with the reptile broods  
In the old sea solitudes,  
Sailing in the new-made light,  
With the curled-up Ammonite.  
Thou surviv'dst the awful shock,  
Which turned the ocean bed to rock,  
And changed its myriad living swarms,  
To the marble's veined forms.

"Thou wast there, thy little boat,  
Airy voyager! kept aloft,  
O'er the waters wild and dismal,  
O'er the yawning gulfs abysmal;  
Amid wreck and overturning,  
Rock-imbued, heaving, burning,  
Mid the tumult and the stir;  
Thou, most ancient mariner,  
In that pearly boat of thine,  
Sail'dst upon the troubled brine."

The stratified rocks were not formed by sudden catastrophes, but by slow deposition, often in very tranquil waters. Nor did the large family of the ammonites perish from convulsive movements of land and sea. It runs through all the formations from the silurian to the chalk, had its greatest development in the oolitic period, and gradually died out.

## VARIETIES.

**THE ENGLISH PRISONERS IN AFGHANISTAN, 1842.**—There was quite enough elasticity of spirits left among the captives (nine ladies, twenty gentlemen, and fourteen children) to render them not disinclined for active and boisterous sports. They played at hop-scotch; they played at blind-man's buff. A favourite game among them was the latter; and when the healthy and cheerful little boys and girls joined in the sport, the mirth ran fast and furious. A Christmas party in Old England seldom sees madder gambols than these; seldom has the heart's laughter risen more freely from a band of merrier children than those who romped with their elders in prison at Budeabad. The Sabbaths were always kept holy. Every Sunday saw the little party of Christian prisoners assembled for the worship of their God—sometimes in the open air, sometimes in tents, in huts, or any other place available for the purpose. Sunday after Sunday the Church service was read to as devout a band of worshippers as ever assembled to render thanks to the Almighty, and to implore the continuance of his mercies. Nor were these observances lost upon their guards. Wild and savage as were their keepers, they seemed to respect the Christians' day of rest. There was more decorum in their demeanour, more courtesy in their manner, than on the working days of the week. An atmosphere of peace and rest seemed to envelope them on that sacred day.—*Kaye's "War in Afghanistan,"* vol. ii. p. 489.

**THE PRECESSION OF THE EQUINOXES.**—In consequence of the precession of the equinoxes, the starry heavens are continually changing their aspect from every portion of the earth's surface. The early races of mankind beheld in the far north the glorious constellations of the southern hemisphere rise before them, which, after remaining long invisible, will again appear in those latitudes after the lapse of thousands of years. The Southern Cross began to become invisible in 52° 30' north latitude, 2900 years before our era, since, according to Galle, this constellation might previously have reached an altitude of more than 10°. When it disappeared from the horizon of the countries of the Baltic, the great Pyramid of Cheops had already been erected more than five hundred years.—*Humboldt.*

**A SCOTCH COW.**—I was one day fishing the Ness out of a boat, when I noticed a cow inquisitively examining some things which I had left by the water-side. On landing, I found she had been influenced by other motives than those of mere curiosity, having eaten up the whole of one side (the button half) of a new macintosh. Happening shortly afterwards to meet the miller whose property she was, I exhibited to him the mangled evidence of her misdeeds, expecting at least to meet with something like sympathy for my loss. His sympathies were, however, all on the other side. He surveyed it for some time in silence and with an air of dejection, and then simply exclaimed, "Eh, but she'll no be the better o' the buttons!"—*"Notes on Natural History,"* by Cornwall Simeon.

**WORTH TRYING.**—The great difficulty of getting horses from a stable where surrounding buildings are in a state of conflagration is well known, and that in consequence of such difficulty, arising from the animals' dread of stirring from the scene of destruction, many horses have perished in the flames. A gentleman whose horses had been in great peril from such a cause, having in vain tried to save them, hit upon the experiment of having them harnessed as though they were going to their usual work, when, to his astonishment, they were led from the stable without difficulty.

**INDIAN AGRICULTURISTS.**—An officer who resided in the district of Behar had an opportunity of observing the cultivation of opium over a period of fourteen years. He says: "They have paid the greatest attention to the

tilling of those fields, and the taste the natives displayed would do credit to a lady's flower garden. From the improved system of cultivating the poppy, the crop is about 50 per cent. more certain than it used to be formerly; and so it would be in the wheat and barley fields if the same attention was paid to irrigation and manure. I merely mention that circumstance to show that the natives are capable of great perfection in cultivation."—*General Tremenhoe's Evidence in Blue Book, on Indian Colonization.*

**HUNGARIAN OR MAGYAR.**—A Hungarian remarks, on the use of the term Magyar:—"Magyar" is the name of our nation in her own language; but ever since the time when the founders of our national existence had transformed old Pannonia into a Hungarian kingdom, the word 'Magyar' in all other European languages was reproduced by the word 'Hungarus'—Hungarian, and we had exchanged with all European nations the mutual courtesy of civilized peoples to possess words of their own for naming each other. The disregard of this custom, although unintentionally on the part of the respective writers, cannot but be offensive to the sentiments of national dignity of my countrymen. Certainly, barbarous or newly-discovered nations are not likely to be called by other than their own names, as it is the case with the numerous Eastern tribes—Kirghises, Tchetchenies, etc., but a similar proceeding could not properly be followed with regard to one of the best known and most ancient peoples of Europe. To call our nation 'Magyar' in English is just as strange as it would be to call the French and Germans the 'Français' and the 'Deutches'; and if in the case in question, besides the argument adduced, the distorted pronunciation of the word 'Magyar'—very difficult to pronounce for a foreigner—be reflected upon, the use of this appellation in the English language sounds almost ludicrously."

**LESLIE AND ROGERS.**—In his "Autobiographical Recollections," Leslie the painter mentions his having heard Rogers more than once repeat the concluding lines of Mrs. Barbauld's "Address to Life":—

"Life, we have been long together,  
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;  
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;  
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;  
Then steal away, give little warning,  
Choose thine own time—  
Say not 'Good night,' but in some brighter clime  
Bid me 'Good morning.'"

The last time he heard Rogers recite this passage was at Brighton, while, unobserved by the poet, a funeral was passing the window. During their stay at Brighton on the same occasion Rogers took Leslie to the Dyke, and as they sat in the carriage looking over the vast expanse of country below, he pointed down to a village that seemed all peace and beauty in the tranquil sunset. "Do you see," he said, "those three large tombstones close to the tower of the church? My father, my mother, and my grandfather are buried there." "Really?" said Leslie. The poet admitted that he was drawing upon his imagination, but added that he at least should like to be buried there. A literary friend to whom this was told vented his indignation against Rogers for so heartless an untruth. Leslie passes from the topic without comment, as if feeling that a jest at such a time were a kind of sacrilege.

**FURS.**—Fine furs should be kept in a cold place. An experienced dealer will tell, the moment he puts his hand on a piece of fur, if it has been lying in a warm dry atmosphere; it renders the fur harsh, dry, and shabby, entirely destroying the rich smooth softness which it will have if kept in a cold room.—*The Lady's Newspaper.*